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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Does anyone know if it's Winter, Spring, or Summer?? What a roller coaster ride we've been having here this past week! Would you believe that the temperature in this area dropped 35 degrees within a matter of 20 minutes! And then dropped even more in the next few hours! How much longer can I keep stating the obvious, that this is ridiculous? I think that we're all pretty much sick of winter and want to see spring take a solid hold!

We're hearing that there is a lot more effort being made to stop the proliferation of spam these days. Not only are there government bodies in the United States working on it, but in other countries also. And internet services like AOL are making headway. It's about time. I compare spam to junk mail and telemarketing calls - garbage. It's a waste of my valuable time even to get rid of it. We need to put an end to this garbage! Soapbox mode off again. I'll go back to my impatient wait for the nice weather to return again.

Until next time...

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Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games Magazine

The folks at the Classic Computer Magazine Archive are delighted to announce that the full text of Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games Magazine is now on the Web, at:

http://www.atarimagazines.com/cva/

A short-lived spin-off from Creative Computing magazine, Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games magazine only published two issues, in 1983. But they were both packed with great information about home video games, computer games, handheld games, and arcade games. The magazines include reviews, guides to mastering games, and informative features.

Highlights include:

Who Really Invented The Video Game?
http://www.atarimagazines.com/cva/v1n1/inventedgames.php

Tokens Begin to Appear In Arcades

Report from the 1983 Summer Consumer Electronics Show
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n1/vgupdate.php

New Top Ten Games At Amusement Operators Expo ’83
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n2/toptengamesofaoe.php

Interviews with Alan Miller, Steve Cartwright, and Carol Shaw
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n2/gamedesigners.php

The Origin of Spacewar
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n1/spacewar.php

Review of the Atari 5200
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n1/atari5200.php

First look at Vectrex
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n1/vectrex.php

Review of LCD Pocket Games
http://www.atarimagazines.com//cva/v1n2/pocketgames.php

Launched in 1996, the Classic Computer Magazine Archive offers full text from Antic, STart, Creative Computing, and Hi-Res magazines, as well as information from Compute! and Compute!’s Gazette.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. This is going to be a short column. There are a lot to things that I’d like to say, and since this is Holy Week for me, there are a lot of things I’m thinking about that I normally wouldn’t even consider bringing up here.

But the fact is that there are all manner of things going on in the world today, and at least a percentage of the trouble could be avoided by just thinking about people as people instead of christian, jew, moslem, hindu, or whatever.

I think that it’d be an incredibly good idea if we all had to acknowledge all of the religions holidays in the world. It’s not that I think we should all have a vacation day for Ramadan, or that everyone should have a Christmas tree in December, or that we should all have a meal of bitter herbs and vegetables for Pesach. It’s that I think that we could all benefit from at least saying to ourselves "yes, this is a night that has special meaning to someone else, and we should be happy and honored to

respect that".

Hell, you don't even have to understand what it's about. Just understanding that not everyone believes exactly the same things would be an excellent start.

And I know that, right now, there are at least a few of you shaking your heads and saying "that'd never work". Well guess what? It HAS worked. And I bet that most of you would never guess where. No, not New York or London or Paris. Would you believe that it was IRAQ?? That's right, the same Iraq that gave us Saddam and the Republican Guard was once a land where an individual's beliefs were respected and... for the most part... protected.

I'll be interested in seeing whether or not this tolerance returns as the "regime" is swept away. Perhaps there is only a small, narrow window of time when tolerance and understanding can grow and flourish, and anything outside of this window will wither and die. I hope not. It would be a shame to miss an opportunity like this one because "its time has passed".

"What does this have to do with Atari computers", you may ask? Well, okay, ya got me. It doesn't have a hell of a lot to do with Atari. But anyone who has belonged to Atari users' groups, gone to Atari computer shows, and hung around on any of the old online services' forums (CIS, GEnie, Delphi) or spent any time on the UseNet knows how easy it is to get caught up in some little matter that seems silly to us, but seems to mean the world (or the end of it) to someone else. Before long, we either "take up the cause", or make it our quest (although I COULD have used the word 'crusade', I didn't) to end the 'foolishness'.

It's incredibly easy to get caught up in things, and even easier to close our minds to things that we don't understand. There's an old story that Gandhi once encountered a fellow hindu who asked the teacher how he could cleanse his soul after having killed a muslim. Gandhi replied that the man must find a muslim orphan and raise him to wipe the slate clean. BUT... he would have to raise him in the ways of Islam, not the hindu ways that the man was already accustomed to.

Stories like that often make me wonder exactly what we're here for. Are we, as some religions assert, here to attain higher levels of spiritual perfection? Or are we here simply to learn that EVERYONE is special? I guess only time will tell.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Paul Hopkins asks about printers:

"Can anyone tell me if the Epson Stylus C82 behaves with a Falcon?

I have used an Epson Stylus 600 with very good results with Image Copy, ST Writer and Everest for a number of years,but now need another printer that will perform equally.

A visit down the high street revealed that most printers now seem to be USB connection so choices now are very limited.

Any information concerning Atari-compatible printers presently on the

market would be most appreciated, and I am sure would be of interest to other Atari Users as well."

Greg Goodwin tells Paul:

"From the Epson USA website:

Q: Is this printer compatible with MS-DOS based applications?

A: If you are trying print from a DOS based application, the printer may not be completely compatible due to the ESC/P raster printer language that is used by your printer. When printing from DOS, color printing is not available. You will need to use the control panel of the printer to replace ink cartridges and perform other maintenance functions.

Thus it appears that the printer will respond to ESC/P (non-raster) commands to some degree, at least as far as black printing is concerned.

The Brother 1240 laser printer is the only printer still on the market that I am CERTAIN will work on an Atari. HP no longer sells PCL3 printers, and Epson no longer sells ESC/P2 printers. Someone posted a year or so back that they were able to print from the Stylus C series, but I do not remember the details."

Christopher Friend adds:

"Assuming they did not remove the old Epson compatibility mode it should work in black and white with the older 9 and 24-pin Epson drivers. I've used my C80 with my XEGS (my ST died so I can't test it with that, but it should work if it works on the 8-bit)."

Tony Cianfaglione asks about mono monitor specs:

"What is the ST monochrome scan rate? Is it 15.75kHz or 31.5 KhZ?"

Adam Klobukowski tells Tony that it's...

"about 31.5 KhZ (VGA compatible)."

Djordje Vukovic tells Adam:

"Actually it is not - but about 35.7kHz (horizontal scan rate) - still sufficiently compatible for most VGA monitors' capabilities. Vertical rate is 501 times less, i.e. 71.2 Hz - mostly VGA compatible, too. Signal levels and are not exactly right, but passable to a VGA monitor."

'Tim' asks about the Falcon030:

"How compatible is the Falcon030 with ST software? What are these worth today?"

David Wade tells Tim:

"I guess anything that depends on exact timing won't run (Like many games). Well behaved stuff will be o.k.

[The price] depends on the config. The last two on E-Bay (UK) I think went for around 300 - 350 dollars."

Mike Freeman adds:

"This [compatibility] is improved greatly by ST(e) emulators, such as Backwards and STE-X/Falcon-X (I think that's what it's called). I've found a ton of my old ST stuff ran fine on my Falcon with these emulators, while they didn't work at all without them. They help correct timing and memory handling issues."

Well folks, that's it for this time around (see? I told you this was going to be a short column). Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sega Now Courted by Namco!
Curbing Violent Game Sales?
No "Shock and Awe" for Sony!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Game On(line) for Microsoft, Sony

Microsoft and Sony share a conviction that playing video games over the Internet is ripe to become as popular as e-mail or instant messaging - only much more lucrative.

Likewise, they have begun marshaling allies and are maneuvering to capture the loyalties of game designers.

Still, they are blazing divergent paths. While Microsoft strictly controls how games are presented on its service, Sony leaves it up to game publishers, Internet service providers and telecoms to decide how to offer online games - and work out how they get paid.

That presents potential partners with a choice: embrace Xbox Live and let Microsoft take care of security, billing and nurturing a cohesive gaming community, or go with Sony's laissez faire approach.

"It's an open vs. closed architecture bet," says Jay Horwitz, Jupiter Research senior technology analyst. "Sony is saying, 'We don't know what this is going to look like, so let's make it as open and extensible as possible to see what works.' "

Whatever approach emerges as dominant will lead what is expected to be a

strong market. Jupiter Research expects the number of game consoles connected to the Internet to double this year to 2.1 million, or 2% of U.S. households, and be in 14% of U.S. households by 2007.

Those projections have grabbed the attention of console makers, gamemakers, Hollywood studios and telecom players.

If Microsoft and Sony can sow the seeds, online gaming could blossom into a multibillion-dollar boost for broadband use and paid Web services.

"We're very hopeful they will succeed . . . and create new business opportunities for us all," says Ken Goldstein, executive vice president of Disney Online.

For now, both companies are rolling out ambitious plans to get consumers to link Microsoft's Xbox console and Sony's PlayStation 2 console to Internet-based gaming services that allow players to team across the Web and zap aliens, seek lost treasure or join cross-state mah-jongg tournaments.

Microsoft has been the most proactive, earmarking $2 billion to establish Xbox Live, a meticulously controlled online service that has earned rave reviews. Launched in the USA in November and recently in Japan and Europe, Xbox Live has attracted 350,000 patrons, thrice what experts predicted.

A $50 starter kit includes a headset that allows players to chatter in real time with other players across town or abroad, and 12 months of free access to any Xbox Live-enabled game, purchased separately. Microsoft hopes to cash in by someday charging subscribers monthly fees for various levels of service, much like cable TV. Its goal: 10 million paying Xbox Live subscribers in five years.

But for now - and for years to come - Xbox will operate at a loss. "We view this as a 20-year investment," says J Allard, Xbox platform vice president. "This is all about creating a foundation that enables the future of gaming. And the future of gaming will be online."

Meanwhile, Sony has sold 500,000 PlayStation 2 Internet adapters. And its PlayStation console has outsold Microsoft's Xbox 50 million to 9 million.

"Microsoft is still trying to find some hook to get consumers interested," says Jack Tretton, executive vice president for Sony Computer Entertainment America. "We see online gaming as an added benefit to consumers who've already purchased our machine."

In a bid to increase its lead, Sony recently announced it will tap IBM computer grids - networks of computer servers that can be exploited to crunch vast amounts of data swiftly - along with new software from start-up Butterfly.net to enable game developers to more cheaply handle the complex links that let thousands of players interact in an always-on virtual world.

That approach has lowered the entry barrier for start-ups like Sherman3D, based in Malaysia, to begin developing virtual playgrounds accessible via multiple computing devices.

"You'll be able to play our game on a PlayStation 2 at your friend's house, then go home and play the exact game on your PC, or play it on your mobile phone," says Curt Benefield, Sherman3D CEO.

Movie, cartoon games next?

While new gamemakers get rolling, old-line content providers like Disney and AOL Time Warner have their eye on the emerging market.

Disney is testing a PC online game, Toontown.com, with no violence or sexual innuendo, which it may later make available as an online console game. Discussions are underway about converting Warner Bros.' movie franchises, such as Harry Potter or The Matrix, into online console games.

Foreshadowing partnerships to come, AOL, a frequent Microsoft rival, last fall teamed with game publisher Electronic Arts to promote NBA Live, a PlayStation 2 online basketball game. Players who used aol.com to access the game received special cheat codes and a one-of-a-kind music track by rap artist Busta Rhymes.

"We believe in the open approach," says Matthew Bromberg, AOL's games vice president. "We're going to partner with the broader community to help them figure this out and help the industry grow."

Butterfly CEO David Levine contends too many iterations of partnerships and specialized gaming services will emerge for Microsoft to dominate. "Xbox Live will become this archipelago completely separate from the mainland of online gaming," Levine predicts.

But Allard says Microsoft will do what it takes to make Xbox Live the de facto standard, providing a spectrum of games that attracts a mainstream audience.

"The big question is whether we can get you to come back, bring friends and spend some money with us, our publishers and our retailers," Allard says. "That's when we all can look at this as an enormous fiscal opportunity."

Gamemaker Sega Courted by 'Tekken' Creator Namco

Japanese software maker Namco Ltd , known for its "Tekken" fighting games, said on Thursday it wants struggling fellow game maker Sega Corp, creator of "Sonic the Hedgehog," to reopen merger talks.

A deal would torpedo Sega's planned October union with pinball machine maker Sammy Corp, a move widely seen as a takeover of Sega by financially sound Sammy.

Sega said it is studying Namco's proposal but has not set any deadline for a decision.

The move underlines the intense rivalry and difficulty of making profits in Japan's $5 billion a year game software industry, and follows the April 1 merger of two popular videogame makers that created third-ranked Square Enix Co

A Sega-Namco merger would rank fifth in the Japanese market with annual sales of 350 billion yen ($2.9 billion) and market capitalization of $1.74 billion, similar to that of Square Enix.

"We are certain that consolidation of the two companies' operations in every business field would bring about maximum synergy effects," Namco said

in a statement.

But analysts say simply getting bigger is not enough in the harshly competitive industry, dominated by software giants such as Nintendo Co Ltd and Konami Corp.

"It (Sega-Namco) is a combination of two weak companies. It won't make sense if they aren't ready to embark on restructuring measures following the merger," said Eiji Maeda, an analyst at Daiwa Institute of Research.

Although it is Japan's largest game arcade operator, Sega has had poor business results since its American football videogame flopped in the U.S. market last year.

In terms of software sales, ninth-ranking Sega and eighth-ranking Namco would have a combined market share of only about 10 percent. In the less profitable arcade game business, the two firms are likely command a 30 percent share, emerging as the biggest game operator in Japan.

Namco said in a statement it had recently approached Sega and resumed merger talks that began last year but had been temporarily suspended at the request of Sega.

"If it happens we would view it as positive for both firms' shares. We're especially interested in potential synergies between their arcade games and amusement facilities businesses," said game software analyst Takashi Oya of Deutsche Bank Group.

Sega and Namco have been in a comprehensive alliance pact in the arcade game business since September 2001.

Namco's aggressive approach appears to confirm speculation that Sega's merger talks with Sammy, Japan's biggest maker of pinball-style "pachinko" game machines, are not going smoothly.

Some of Sega's board members, shareholders and software developers are said to oppose the deal, seeing little merit in a merger with Sammy focusing on pachinko equipment.

Sega's talks with Sammy have been given a thumbs-down by investors, who pushed the shares of both companies to record lows after an announcement in February of their planned merger.

Financial daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun said on Thursday that Namco had proposed a merger to take effect early next year, with Sega the surviving entity.

It would enable Namco to consolidate maintenance and distribution networks and strengthen game software development capabilities, the paper said.

Sega, which posted its fifth consecutive annual net loss in 2001/02 and is due to redeem 50 billion yen in convertible bonds in June 2004, recently cut its profit forecast for the year that ended on March 31 by 90 percent.

The Asian Wall Street Journal reported last month that both Microsoft Corp and U.S. game maker Electronic Arts Inc were considering "white knight" bids for Sega.

FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS for the PlayStation Game Console Ships to North American Retailers

Remastered Editions of Legendary Role-Playing Games FINAL FANTASY and FINAL FANTASY II Titles Include Enhanced Features

LOS ANGELES, April 8 /PRNewswire/ -- Square Enix U.S.A., Inc., the publisher of all SQUARE ENIX products in North America announced that FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS for the PlayStation game console shipped to North American retailers.

FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS combines the groundbreaking FINAL FANTASY and FINAL FANTASY II role-playing game titles into one disc. The remastered editions feature new cinematic movies, opening theme songs, updates of the original event sequences, enhanced graphics, improved sound quality as well as new game play modes making the games accessible to beginners and veterans alike. Together, these two titles laid the foundation for the series and spawned many hit sequels that have now sold over 44 million units worldwide.

FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS also includes a new bestiary with detailed descriptions of all monsters, access to art galleries with illustrations from renowned artist Yoshitaka Amano, a photo gallery featuring key moments in both titles and a "memo file" function for quick, convenient saves. FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS for the PlayStation game console is a single player game with an ESRB rating of "T" (Teen) and carries a suggested retail price (SRP) of $30 (USD).

FINAL FANTASY was originally released in North America in 1990 for the Nintendo Entertainment System and is considered one of the first RPGs to immerse players into an emotion-packed gaming adventure. Added elements such as touching CG movies events will allow gamers to experience FINAL FANTASY in ways not possible in its prior release. The game follows the story of four young warriors, each possessing a special crystal, who are summoned to bring harmony back to a world threatened by an evil entity intent on conquering it. Following their unknown destinies, the warriors battle heinous monsters and travel to places they never imagined possible in their quest to restore order to their world.

FINAL FANTASY II, originally released in Japan in 1988, is being offered for the first time in North America. The game set the benchmark for the role- playing genre with its progressive battle system, complex story and deep character development and can now be enjoyed in news ways with several enhanced features. FINAL FANTASY II tells the story of a malevolent emperor that has called upon demonic monsters to take over the world. In the chaos that follows, thousands succumb to their evil attacks until four young, orphaned survivors take it upon themselves to stop the merciless rule and avenge the deaths of their parents.

In conjunction with the game’s release, BradyGames has created the FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS Official Strategy Guide, the ultimate resource for the two classic games featured in this collection -- FINAL FANTASY and FINAL FANTASY II. The complete walkthroughs for both epic adventures will steer players in the right direction, with detailed strategies and area maps. The unstoppable boss tactics will give gamers the power to topple every fiend in both games. The all-inclusive bestiary will provide players with the strengths and weaknesses of each enemy, while the exhaustive item and equipment lists will help gamers choose the best weapon for each situation. With all side quests, mini-games, and secrets revealed, players will have

endless gameplay options and hours of replay value. The strategy guide is available at electronics, book and software retailers for $14.99 US/$21.99 CAN.

War Games Top U.S. Video Game Sales Charts

Combat-themed video games dominated the U.S. sales charts in early April as news of the real war in Iraq blanketed the airwaves, according to data released on Wednesday.

For the week ending April 5, NovaLogic’s "Delta Force: Black Hawk Down" topped the list of best-selling PC games as compiled by research firm The NPD Group, the second week in a row it was the best-selling game.

"Black Hawk Down" is based on a battle fought by U.S. soldiers in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993. The game has no affiliation with either the best-selling nonfiction book account of the raid, Mark Bowden’s "Black Hawk Down," or the film of the same name that was based on the book.

The company has said it would donate a portion of its sales of the game to charities for families of injured or killed military personnel.

In four of the last five weeks, fully 50 percent of the top games list has been either stand-alone war games, or add-on packages for existing war games.

Holding the No. 2 spot for the second week running after three weeks at No. 1 was Electronic Arts Inc. with "Command & Conquer: Generals." EA also charted in the war games category with "Battlefield 1942" and an expansion pack for that game called "Road to Rome."

Game developers and publishers have been quick to jump on the bandwagon in an industry where success hangs on capitalizing on the latest trends.

SCi, the British developer behind the Gulf War game "Conflict: Desert Storm" has said it will develop a sequel and Activision Inc. recently said it will publish a line of games based on 20th Century military conflicts under the "Call to Duty" brand.

Sony Tries to Trademark ’Shock and Awe’

A day after U.S. allied forces marched into Iraq, Sony applied for a trademark on the war’s catchphrase, "shock and awe," for use as the title of a video game, according to a filing with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

It was unclear if Sony had any plans to make use of the name. Calls to Sony Computer Entertainment America were not answered Friday.

The application, dated March 21, was first discovered by British publication Media Guardian.

Sony was not the only company hoping to profit from the label. The U.S. Patent and Trademark office has more than a dozen recent applications for

uses of the phrase, including for fireworks, lingerie, baby toys, shampoo and consulting services.

Michael Knight of Irving, Texas, who has a business that makes plastic details for the plumbing industry, has applied for a "Shock & Awe" trademark on pesticides and herbicides.

"I interviewed family and friends and strangers, and they all thought it would be a great name for a product like that," Knight said. "Not one has said it would be a bad name."

Knight hoped that Monsanto or some other manufacturer could sell "Shock & Awe" pesticides under his label.

"You want to shock the bug, and then you want to be awed when you come back and see it gone," he said.

Companies and individuals often apply for trademarks on products that never make it to market.

Battlefront.com Inc., which makes computer strategy games, had applied for the name "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

A statement on the company’s Web site said it had no immediate plans to publish a game under that name, and might never use it, since the name "is a bit corny."

The phrase "shock and awe" was coined, but apparently not trademarked, by military strategist Harlan Ullman in a 1996 publication. He used it to describe a tactic of pressuring the enemy to give up with little fighting.

Sony Drops ’Shock and Awe’ for PlayStation Games

Responding to criticism that it was trying to take advantage of the Iraq war for commercial gain, Sony Corp said on Wednesday it will not use the phrase "shock and awe" for PlayStation videogames made by a subsidiary.

A U.S. unit of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc has withdrawn an application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to register the phrase for commercial use, a Sony spokeswoman said.

The application had been made last month shortly after U.S.-led forces began an attack on Iraq with a strategy of heavy aerial bombardment termed "shock and awe."

"We have withdrawn the application which was made on March 21," the Sony spokeswoman said.

While there had been no specific plans to use the phrase for a title of PlayStation software, the electronic giant now felt the application was inappropriate, she said.

Rockstar Games Ships Midnight Club II for PlayStation 2

Rockstar Games, the publishing division of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. is proud to announce that Midnight Club II for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system is shipping today to retail stores in North America. Midnight Club II is the sequel to the best-selling, Greatest Hits PlayStation¾2 computer entertainment system launch title Midnight Club.

This latest installment of the Midnight Club franchise features unprecedented racing technology, online play, and three massive cities to race in. The April 2003 issue of Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine named Midnight Club II its "Game of the Month" and awarded it a perfect score of 5 out of 5 stars.

"For over two years, we have worked non-stop to ensure that Midnight Club II delivers an experience unmatched in terms of open-ended, non-linear racing action and quite simply, the fastest racing game ever created," said Dan Houser, Vice President of Creative. "With sprawling urban environments, over 30 vehicles, and engaging, immersive online modes, Midnight Club II is set to redefine the racing genre."

Midnight Club II moves racing games from tracks to the city streets. The most notorious drivers meet each night in three of the world’s greatest cities - Los Angeles, Paris and Tokyo, driving the latest performance enhanced cars and bikes and competing head-to-head in hopes of making a name for themselves. Now it’s your turn. There are no rules. Drive anywhere in the city, find the fastest route, and win the car or bike.

Additional information about Midnight Club II is available at www.rockstargames.com/midnightclub2.

Downhill Domination Delivers Speed, Challenge and an Adrenaline Rush in the First-Ever Downhill Mountain Bike Racing Game for PlayStation2

From the Developers of Twisted Metal: Black and War of the Monsters; Downhill Mountain Bike Game Features Real-Life Riders, Licensed Manufacturers and Global Courses

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the summer 2003 release of Downhill Domination, available exclusively for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Developed and created by Sony Computer Entertainment America’s Santa Monica studio and Incog Inc. Entertainment, Downhill Domination is the first downhill mountain bike racing game ever published for a next-generation console and features professional riders, licensed manufacturers, a broad-appealing music roster and courses from around the globe.

Downhill Domination is based on the extreme sport of downhill mountain bike racing and puts players in control of a customizable mountain bike to race down vertical mountainsides and urban environments while performing stunts at speeds in excess of 60 miles per hour. Playable in first- and third-person perspectives, players will be able to select from one of 14 riders, including five pro-riders in an intense race to gain corporate sponsorship and a chance at the coveted Downhill Domination Championship.

"Due to its vertical racing style and competitive nature, the sport of downhill mountain bike racing has globally reached participants and spectators throughout the U.S., Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, Belgium,

Spain, and numerous other countries," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "With the upcoming release of Downhill Domination, we are able to deliver the first extreme sport of this nature to PlayStation 2 fans while expanding the racing category to new heights."

In Downhill Domination, there are three unique course styles including Mountain Cross, Technical Downhill and Freeride through 27 expansive and interactive "go anywhere" track designs. During gameplay, players have the freedom to pick the best racing line through unforgiving canyons, forests, city streets and more while avoiding environmental and weather hazards. For points earned, players can upgrade with real-world mountain bike components to enhance performance. In addition to fully customizable bikes, Downhill Domination incorporates more than 30 super tricks and an assortment of "combat" tactics to take down event the most hardened riders. Players can choose from five different multi-player modes, allowing up to four players to race simultaneously. Downhill Domination also features various licensed alternative, punk, hip-hop, techno and classic rock tunes that capture the energy and excitement of each race.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has not yet rated Downhill Domination. For more information about the ERSB visit www.esrb.com.

PlayStation 2 Undergoes Major Update

Sony Computer Entertainment will put an upgraded version of its PlayStation 2 video game on sale in Japan in mid May, the company said Monday. The new machine will be the first major upgrade SCEI has made to its hit gaming platform since it first went on sale just over three years ago.

The SCPH-50000 doesn’t add much to the gaming experience but it does improve on the unit’s ability to work as a DVD player. Whereas the current machine accepts only DVD-Video discs, at least officially, the new console adds support for the DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, and DVD+RW recordable and rewritable formats. It doesn’t support DVD-RAM.

"The current player can read some of those discs but it’s not stable," said Yoshiko Furusawa, a spokesperson for the Tokyo-based company. "We never officially supported them but now we do."

The new console can also output a progressive-scan video image, which should mean a better picture for users with a compatible television. The console is also quieter and the remote controller has been improved with the addition of a power on/off button and eject button - functions that require a trip from the couch to the console on the current model.

It’s not just new features that make the SCH-50000 different from its predecessor. Sony has removed the iLink (also called IEEE1394 or Firewire) connector from the console.

"We took if off," said Furusawa. "The broadband environment has become popular and we think the capabilities that we wanted to use iLink for can be realized for users through the network."

The console will retail for around $207, which is just a little more than

the current PlayStation 2 sells for in Japan at present. Furusawa said the company would announce plans for overseas sales as soon as plans had been determined.

SCEI’s move to add features to the PlayStation 2 comes at a time when Microsoft, one of its two major competitors, is cutting the price of its Xbox console to better compete. Microsoft last week cut its European retail price for the Xbox console by 20 percent to $214.

For its part, Sony has been trying to pump hardware sales through promotions and special edition machines, such as in February this year when it put on sale five versions of the standard console with colored cases rather than a plain black case.

In January the company said production of the PlayStation 2 had hit the 50 million unit mark.

Washington State Aims to Curb Violent Game Sales

Retail employees in Washington state who sell violent video games to minors would face a $500 fine under a bill passed by the state Senate on Thursday.

The measure, approved 47-7, would target games that depict violence against women and the killing of police officers. It was passed by the state House last month and is expected to be signed into law by Gov. Gary Locke.

One of the games likely to be hit by the measure is "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," which has become one of the hottest-selling titles for Sony Corp.’s PlayStation 2 console.

Gail Markels, general counsel to the Interactive Digital Software Association, denounced the measure as a misguided attempt at video game censorship.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Floridians Get Millions in Microsoft Case

Microsoft will pay up to $202 million to settle class action suits in Florida that accuse it of violating the state’s antitrust and unfair competition laws by overcharging for its software.

The money will be distributed among consumers and businesses that bought Microsoft’s operating systems, productivity suite, spreadsheet, or word processing software between November 16, 1995, and December 31, 2002 for use in Florida, the company said in a statement Tuesday.

The settlement was filed Tuesday in Miami-Dade Circuit Court and was given preliminary approval by Judge Henry H. Hamage. A hearing for final approval of the deal is set for November 24, Microsoft said.

The terms require Microsoft to pay up to $202 million, which will be distributed in the form of vouchers that can be used to buy a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer from any manufacturer, running any operating system and software, the company said.

Microsoft will provide half of any settlement money that goes unclaimed to needy public schools in Florida in the form of vouchers. Those vouchers will also be good for computer equipment, software and training from any manufacturer, the company said. About 1600 Florida schools will be eligible for the vouchers.

In January Microsoft settled a class action lawsuit in California for $1.1 billion in a similarly structured deal. Microsoft agreed to pay two-thirds of the unclaimed money in that case to California schools. That settlement took care of the lion’s share of the private antitrust cases pending against Microsoft, the company said at the time.

The private cases followed a federal antitrust case finding that Microsoft had abused its monopoly status in the desktop operating systems market to the detriment of consumers. A settlement in that case was approved last year.

Earlier also on Tuesday, a federal judge in Maryland rejected class action status for a group of consumer lawsuits against Microsoft. He said it would be difficult to consider the consumers as a single class of plaintiffs.

Bill Piotrowski, executive director of Technology and Information Services for Leon District Schools in Tallahassee, in a statement hailed the Florida deal as "great news for schools all across Florida."

Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith said the settlement allows Microsoft to avoid "the cost and uncertainty of a lengthy trial" and focus on the future.

Does Apple Still Need Microsoft?

Nearly six years have passed since Microsoft agreed to invest US$150 million in Apple Computer and continue developing Mac versions of its Office application suite for at least five years.

In the intervening period, both companies have experienced many changes. Apple has transformed from a moribund entity whose doom was foretold by countless pundits into an innovative niche player - the high-tech equivalent of a luxury carmaker. And Microsoft has weathered several years of antitrust litigation, maintaining its operating system and business application hegemony while simultaneously evolving into a dominant player in the nascent Web services space.

After the agreement between the two companies expired in August 2002, a new pact was not signed. Microsoft continues to produce Office software for the Mac OS, but Apple recently has released products that could indicate it is trying to free itself from the software giant’s occupation

of much of its prime desktop real estate.

Is Apple seeking independence from the Redmond, Washington-based superpower?

Earlier this year, Apple introduced two applications for its Jaguar (OS X version 10.2) operating system: Safari, a Web browser that has received plaudits despite its beta status; and Keynote, a stand-alone presentation application that offers an elegant alternative to Microsoft's own PowerPoint product.

Adam Engst, the publisher of Mac community newsletter TidBits, told the E-Commerce Times there is no question that Apple is targeting Microsoft's weaker offerings with its new software.

"Neither Internet Explorer nor PowerPoint had been significantly improved in quite some time, and both stand alone more than Word and Excel," Engst said. "Frankly, it makes a lot of sense for Apple, because it's extremely awkward for a company to be reliant on its primary competitor for key pieces of application software."

Engst explained that he believes Apple is on track to provide a substitute for Microsoft Office, and that Keynote is the first piece in this puzzle. He noted, however, that this strategy existed even before Keynote's introduction. Apple's "Mail" e-mail application, introduced for OS X and radically upgraded in the Jaguar update, replaced Microsoft's Outlook Express as the default Mac e-mail client.

Whether Apple can provide its users with a viable business productivity suite is another matter. Michael Silver, vice president and research director of hardware and operating systems at Gartner, told the E-Commerce Times that compatibility issues hamper development of an Office alternative.

"Making something that offers 100 percent compatibility with Microsoft Office is nearly impossible because of the proprietary code embedded in so much of it," Silver said. Because compatibility is such a key concern in today's Windows-centric world, any Mac productivity software will need to integrate seamlessly with its Windows counterpart in order to succeed.

"If Apple could achieve 100 percent compatibility with Microsoft, it could be very interesting," Silver said. "I bet there are many people who would love to find an alternative."

Bryan Chaffin, editor of Web site The Mac Observer told the E-Commerce Times that it remains to be seen whether or not Apple will release a supercharged version of AppleWorks, or some sort of "iOffice" product, as part of an overall strategy to go head-to-head with Microsoft in the productivity market.

"My gut feeling is that Apple doesn't so much ... want independence from Microsoft, but rather to end reliance on Microsoft," Chaffin said. "The former isn't all that realistic considering Microsoft's monopoly power, but the latter will turn Microsoft into a competitor on the Mac platform that has to earn its money."

Chaffin added that even though a new agreement between the two companies is improbable, Microsoft still has incentive to continue developing Office for Mac OS.

The Redmond, Washington-based software giant "makes a lot of money on the product, and it is one of the few things they can sell to non-Windows-using Mac users," he said. "For a company seeking to perpetually increase revenues and profits, cutting off a revenue stream ... that Office offers just doesn't make sense, unless it is done in retribution. The same goes for Virtual PC for Mac and Microsoft's other Mac offerings."

Gartner analyst Silver noted that in addition to the profit incentive, Microsoft still wants to avoid doing things that appear to stifle competition. Its continued support of Office for Macintosh is a means to help deflect future accusations of this nature.

So, the cords that connect Microsoft and Apple, though tenuous, appear to be holding steady. Whether they will weaken in the future remains to be seen, but whatever the outcome, signs point toward a changing dynamic between the two sometime allies.

Apple Releases New Safari Beta

Apple Computer Inc. on Monday released a new beta version of its Web browser, Safari. The update brings the current version of the browser to 1.0 beta 2 (v73).

"Safari is already an incredible success, with more than 2 million downloads since its launch," said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. "Safari has brought innovation back to the browser market and now we are making it even better."

Besides improved stability, the new beta adds tabbed browsing, allowing users to view multiple Web pages in a tabbed format. Safari now also includes AutoFill, which allows web forms and password fields to be automatically filled out.

"AutoFill and its integration with the AddressBook shows how we are using the tools in Mac OS X and building on the platform as we grow," Brian Croll, Apple's senior director software, Worldwide Product Marketing, told MacCentral.

Apple enhanced integration between Safari and another Apple technology: AppleScript. The company has posted a page on its Web site giving users several free AppleScripts that can be used with Safari.

AppleScripts in the collection include Import Image Into iPhoto; Open Linked Images; Combine Windows; Open Reuters News Stories; eMail the Current URL; Create Phone List; Windows to Full Screen; and Side-By-Side.

Safari is Apple's own implementation of a standards-compliant Web browser, built around KHTML. Billed as "the turbo browser for Mac OS X," Safari is Apple's solution to a long-standing problem: The slow speed of Web browsing on Mac OS X.

Safari Beta 2 introduces a new feature called "Reset Safari." This option erases browsing history, empties the cache, clears the Downloads window, removes cookies, clears Google search entries and removes any saved names and passwords or other AutoFill text.

Croll declined to comment on a date when users could expect a final

release, but he did say, "we are going to continue moving forward and when we hit all of our goals as far as features, performance and compatibility, we will be ready to call it a 1.0 release."

Safari 1.0 beta 2 (v73) is available for download via the Software Update control panel in Mac OS X.

AOL Testing Video, Audio on Instant Messaging

America Online, a unit of AOL Time Warner Inc., has started testing the ability for AOL subscribers to transfer video and audio clips over instant messaging, which lets users chat in real-time.

If AOL decides to implement the feature after the testing, it will be available only to AOL members, not to those who are using its AIM instant messaging service that is available free, - at least initially - an AOL spokesman said on Tuesday.

The feature lets members record video messages on a Web camera and then forward the short messages using instant messaging to others on AOL, who can then open it. As part of the test, the same type of transfer can be done with audio files.

The offerings do not fly in the face of conditions the Federal Communications Commission put on AOL at the time of its Time Warner merger in 2001 because it does not include streaming applications, the spokesman said.

"If I were to send you a video message using the feature, I'd record it, then I'd send it to you. You would open it and then it would play, as opposed to streaming it live and always-on between users," the spokesman said.

FCC barred the new AOL Time Warner from offering streaming video over an advanced instant messaging system until it was interoperable with others because AOL at the time was the dominant player in the instant messaging sector.

The company started testing the new video and audio features in the last two weeks to see if it would be well-received by its users before including it in the next version of the AOL service. It has been more popular among early adopters rather than the mass market, thus far,

AOL For Mac OS X Adds Broadband Options

America Online Inc. has released a new version of AOL for Mac OS X that includes the ability to add the AOL for Broadband service to any high-speed DSL or cable Internet connection, as well as beefed-up parental controls.

America Online launched AOL for Mac OS X last August. The updated version offers a "bring your own access" (BYOA) plan if you already have broadband access through another company. BYOA subscriptions allow unlimited use of the service using a high-speed connection, including multiple simultaneous log-ins of up to seven screen names on the same AOL account. AOL for

Broadband has a nationwide dial-up network, so you can access your personalized AOL features, news, and data while on the road (assuming, of course, you can get to a high-speed Internet connection).

The updated AOL for Mac OS X adds new Internet Access Controls for those using a broadband connection. An AOL Guardian feature lets parents obtain e-mail "report cards" each time a child uses AOL. The report cards show how the kids are using the Internet. Also, parents who are at work or away from home can go to AOL.com and set or adjust specific restrictions for Internet access, chat, e-mails, and instant messaging.

The AOL Voicemail service offers e-mail and home voicemail from the Web using any computer and logging onto the AOL Web site, as well as from wireless phones and PDAs. Virus protection is provided by McAfee Security, which automatically scans attachments to incoming and outgoing e-mails for viruses. The "Report Spam" button on the AOL Mailbox now lets you report multiple pieces of unwanted mail to AOL simultaneously.

With new instant messaging features, you can automatically forward incoming instant messages to a text-enabled wireless phone when you’re not online. There are also new buddy icons, buddy sounds, graphical "smileys," and backgrounds

The updated AOL for Mac OS X boasts improved e-mail features, including the ability to set automated "away messages" when you can’t check e-mail for a period of time. There’s also automatic delivery and notification of new mail in a member’s open mailbox. You can manage your AOL Mail with the ability to set, sort, and display e-mails by date, subject, sender, or type. You can also categorize incoming messages by people you know, recognized bulk senders, and unknown senders.

AOL’s search function has been enhanced. Now, from one place, you can search for news headlines, local resources through AOL Yellow Pages, images, movies, stock quotes, maps and directions, and more.

According to AOL, an upcoming version of the Mac OS X service will offer tweaked e-mail and instant messaging with AOL Communicator, which integrates AOL Mail, AOL Instant Messenger, and the AOL Address Book. Look for a "preview" release of AOL Communicator for Mac OS X soon.

This new version of AOL for Mac OS X is available now as a free upgrade for existing members in the U.S. at AOL Keyword: Upgrade. New users can go to America Online for pricing info.

AOL for Mac OS X requires a G3 or G4, Mac OS X 10.1 or higher, 128MB of RAM, 75MB of hard disk space, a minimum 800 x 600 screen resolution, and, of course, a pre-existing Internet connection, AirPort network, or Mac OS X compatible modem.

AOL Takes on Spammers, Files Five Lawsuits

America Online, the Internet arm of AOL Time Warner Inc., said on Tuesday it has filed five separate lawsuits against more than a dozen individuals and companies that have been sending high volumes of unwanted junk e-mail, or spam, to its subscribers.

AOL, which has 27 million Internet subscribers in the United States, said

in a statement that the defendants are together responsible for sending about 1 billion unsolicited messages, hawking everything from pornography and steroids to college degrees and mortgages.

Spam sent by the defendants has generated more than 8 million individual complaints from AOL members, which the company said it is using as evidence in the lawsuits.

The lawsuits were filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in Alexandria.

The company alleges that the defendants are in violation of the Virginia Computer Crimes Act, the Federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act or the Washington state Commercial Electronic Mail Act. Penalties under some of these acts call for violators to pay $10 a spam message or $25,000 a day.

AOL is seeking civil penalties, total monetary damages of at least $10 million, and court orders to immediately halt spamming from these defendants.

The action comes as the industry intensifies its legal and legislative efforts to combat the growing problem of spam, which by some estimates accounts for 40 percent of e-mail traffic worldwide. Last week, two U.S. senators introduced a bill aimed at cutting down on spam.

AOL rivals EarthLink Inc. and Microsoft Corp.’s MSN have also pursued legal action and have introduced more tools for their users to also combat spam.

According to Forrester Research, North American online users said more than one-third of their e-mail is junk mail, with the average consumer getting bombarded with 110 unwanted e-mails every week.

The AOL lawsuits are the first anti-spam legal action the company has taken since May 2001. So far the company’s anti-spam efforts have included 20 lawsuits against more than 100 individuals and companies.

The lawsuits come as AOL struggles to offset a slump in its dial-up subscriber base and advertising and contend with federal probes into its accounting practices.

As part of its turnaround efforts, AOL has stepped up efforts to keep its subscribers happy by reducing spam and curtailing pop-up ads, for example. AOL typically blocks 1.5 billion spam e-mails daily on its Internet service.

Judge Asked to Quash ’Deceptively Bland’ Spam

U.S. regulators on Thursday asked a federal judge to shut down an Internet spammer who it says uses "deceptively bland" subject lines to steer people to adult Web sites.

Lawyers with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission asked for a restraining order on Brian Westby, an alleged purveyor of unwanted junk e-mail, or spam, based in St. Louis.

The agency said Westby used unassuming subject lines such as "Did you hear the news?" to drive Internet users to a sexually explicit Web site called

"Married But Lonely."

"In some cases, consumers may have opened the e-mails in their offices, in violation of company policies," the FTC said. "In other cases, children may have been exposed to inappropriate adult-oriented material."

Earlier this week America Online, the Internet arm of AOL Time Warner Inc. filed five separate lawsuits against more than a dozen individuals and companies that have been sending high volumes of spam to its subscribers.

The FTC lawsuit filed on Thursday marks the first time the FTC has based a complaint on the use of deceptive subject lines, a lawyer for the FTC said.

"It’s focused on the subject line, and the subject line being a deceptive door-opener," said FTC lawyer Steven Wernikoff.

The e-mails also used phony "from" lines, a tactic known as "spoofing" that makes it appear that the mail came from an innocent third party, the agency said.

"As a result, thousands of undeliverable e-mails flooded back to the computer systems of these third parties, deluging their computer systems with an influx of spam that couldn’t be delivered to the addressee," the FTC said.

The e-mails contained a link to "unsubscribe" and avoid any more e-mails. However, people who tried to use the link ended up getting an error message, the agency said.

Westby could not be reached for comment. His phone number in suburban St. Louis is unpublished.

Although spam is widely regarded as one of the top nuisances on the Internet, it is not illegal under U.S. law.

The FTC pursues spammers who violate existing laws against deceptive and unfair trade practices, and has announced hundreds of settlements in recent years.

Congressional efforts to limit spam have stumbled over opposition from direct marketers who say their activities would be unfairly limited. But lawmakers, notably Montana Republican Sen. Conrad Burns, are vowing to try again this year.

Australia to Take Action Against Junk Email

Australia would ban the unsolicited sending of electronic junk mail known as spam under proposed tough legislation to help control the problem, Communications Minister Richard Alston said on Wednesday.

Alston said laws targeted at Australian-sourced spam would help cut the rising volume of junk email which clogs systems and often contains offensive content.

"The combination of those two I think means that people expect that legislation should be put in place," Alston told reporters. "In principle, there is no reason why this legislation should not come forward in the next

few months."

A report released by Alston on Wednesday recommended laws banning the sending of commercial electronic messages without the prior consent of the end user, unless there was an existing business-customer relationship.

It said all commercial electronic messaging should also be required to contain accurate details of the senders name and physical and electronic addresses.

But most spam originates outside Australia and Alston said the issue would also need to be addressed internationally.

Two U.S. senators introduced an anti-spam bill last week, while leading Internet service provider America Online said on Tuesday it had filed five lawsuits against most than a dozen people and companies sending spam to its subscribers.

"We will pursue all the multi-lateral options and do what we can to negotiate arrangements with countries that seem to us to be the most relevant," Alston said.

Australia has already held talks with the United States and will raise the issue through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum.

The broader strategy also called for Internet service providers to make filtering tools available at reasonable cost to control spam, which includes pornography, black market drugs offers, money laundering schemes and bogus prizes.

Internet Industry Association Chief Executive Peter Coroneos said Internet users would be given a month-long free trial of filtering technologies, as the industry became increasingly concerned about the impact of spam on email.

"Everyone is very worried that the utility of the Internet itself is being diminished," he told reporters.

Avoid Iraqi Cons Online

While the war in Iraq is unprecedented in supporting timely reports from the front lines, much of the online activity surrounding the conflict has a familiar tone. Besides the expected digital humor and free expression, pervasive scam artists are seizing the opportunity to cadge money from unwitting patriots.

"The only thing that makes it worse is that they are preying on something that people fundamentally feel should not be preyed upon," said Audri Lanford, who runs Internet ScamBusters, which debunks digital hoaxes. "But I guess you could say the same thing about schemes that prey on the elderly."

Familiar mass mailings have taken on a Mideast flavor. Consider the electronic petitions (pro-Bush or anti-war), or messages urging recipients to send the President a small bag of rice and Biblical message to feed one’s enemies in the name of peace (the White House did not respond to a

query about how much rice has been received).

Humor also abounds. Making the rounds is a good news/bad news joke about a meeting of Saddam’s doubles, where it is announced that the Iraqi leader had lost his arm. Another compares the Vietnam War with the current situation in the form of a pre-flight checklist: "Cabal of oldsters who won’t listen to outside advice? Check. Corrupt Texan in the WH? Check. France secretly hoping we fall on our asses? Check. Vietnam 2, you are cleared to taxi."

Speaking of France, anti-France humor has been crossing the Internet for weeks, sometimes uncovering inside jokes. For example, until the word spread, searching Google for "French military victories" came up blank. A more recent jab at alleged allies is this quickie: "Poland announced it has sent troops to the Gulf to help the coalition forces.... Mexico has no idea what to do with them."

Much less lighthearted than the digital humor, online scams involving Iraq are designed to capitalize on patriotic feelings that have emerged during the current conflict. Some might argue it’s the extreme scammer who takes advantage of current events to cheat others, but the senders are probably no worse (or no better) than the scam artists who insinuate themselves into our in-boxes each day.

For instance, a variation of the familiar Nigerian Scam 419 has quickly surfaced. That e-mail hoax, which has been making the rounds for years, involves an alleged plea for assistance getting cash out of a country under siege - for a generous cut.

In the updated version, we have Eng Farouk Al-Bashar, allegedly the oldest son of an oil-rich Iraqi family. He writes to ask for our help in the transportation of $12.5 million in cash from a Baghdad vault. For your trouble you get 10 percent, or a negotiated amount.

It’s now common knowledge that these scams are the basis for identity theft, bank fraud and even kidnapping. But a naive recipient who has not heard about this fraud may fall for it (although the line about "there is no avenue to transfer any amount from Iraq without Saddam knowing" will probably be revised by the next mailing).

Crafting old scams to current events is not new, hoax-watchers say. ScamBusters recalls two primary types of scams after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks: aid requests for rescue workers and for civilians. Digital opportunists were quick to urge contributions - but not always to the source the givers intended.

Since spammers are too lazy to vary their pitch, just change "rescue workers" to "American soldiers," and "civilians" to "refugees," and you have a pretty good picture of scams centered on the Iraqi situation.

ScamBusters recommends the following, in times or war or peace: If you want to donate to a bona fide organization, go directly to its home page to donate. Links in scam charity e-mails ensure that you are paying the scammers, not the charities. And never donate based on an unsolicited e-mail. Always give to a trusted charity.

Distributors of e-mail worms are also exploiting the Iraqi situation by putting a war reference in the subject line, some antivirus product vendors warn. For example, anyone receiving an attachment that promises a patriotic message or a George Bush animation may send the W32/Ganda-A worm to

everyone in their address book. Iraq also inspired virus writers last December, when an innocuous worm used Iraq_oil as one of its several names.

Each cataclysmic world event seems to spawn its own urban legend. Lycos reports that the first urban legend to come out of the war in Iraq may be about the camel spider.

Recently, e-mail circulated stating that troops are encountering these amazing creatures, who purportedly run at speeds of 25 miles per hour and climb onto the bellies of camels and eat their stomachs from the outside, numbing the flesh by secreting a natural anesthetic. As the story goes, the creatures were even attacking our soldiers at night, many of whom awoke to find missing flesh.

A search for "camel spider" describes an animal that is somewhat more benign, along with a story from Air Force Link that seeks to correct the Internet-borne misconceptions. The Air Force story, however, contains some legend-creating facts: The little beast is a cross between a spider and a scorpion. And "chemicals such as bug sprays are not recommended as they most likely will do nothing but make the spider angry."

The perpetuation of these scams and legends underscores that the public remains unable to grasp some obvious truths: You shouldn't believe everything you read, and no one will give you money for nothing.

The FBI reports Internet fraud has tripled in the past year. ScamBusters' Lanford, pointing out that the Nigerian scam takes in about $200 million a year, maintains it's a matter of education - "which is why we run ScamBusters as a public service," she notes.

"The Internet is still growing, so there will always be new people to scam," Lanford adds.

Texas Instruments Founder Green Dies

Cecil Howard Green, the last living member of the four founders of Texas Instruments, died Saturday, the company announced. He was 102.

Green had recently contracted pneumonia and died in La Jolla, Calif.

"Cecil's leadership helped shape the very foundation of Texas Instruments - respect for people, ethics in business, and the strong belief that we need to give back to our community," said Tom Engibous, chairman, president and CEO of Texas Instruments.

In December 1941, Green joined Eugene McDermott, J. Erik Jonsson and H. Bates Peacock to buy Dallas-based Geophysical Service Inc., the predecessor to Texas Instruments.

During World War II, GSI branched into the production of submarine detection devices for the U.S. military.

In 1951, the company's name was changed to Texas Instruments, and GSI became a subsidiary. Officials introduced electronics production into the business mix.

Texas Instruments had more than $8 billion in revenue last year.

Green, who was born in England, was made an Honorary Knight of the British Empire in 1991 by Queen Elizabeth II.

Green's wife, Ida Mabelle Flansburgh Green, died in 1986. They had no children.

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